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John Heminge

and

Henry Condell

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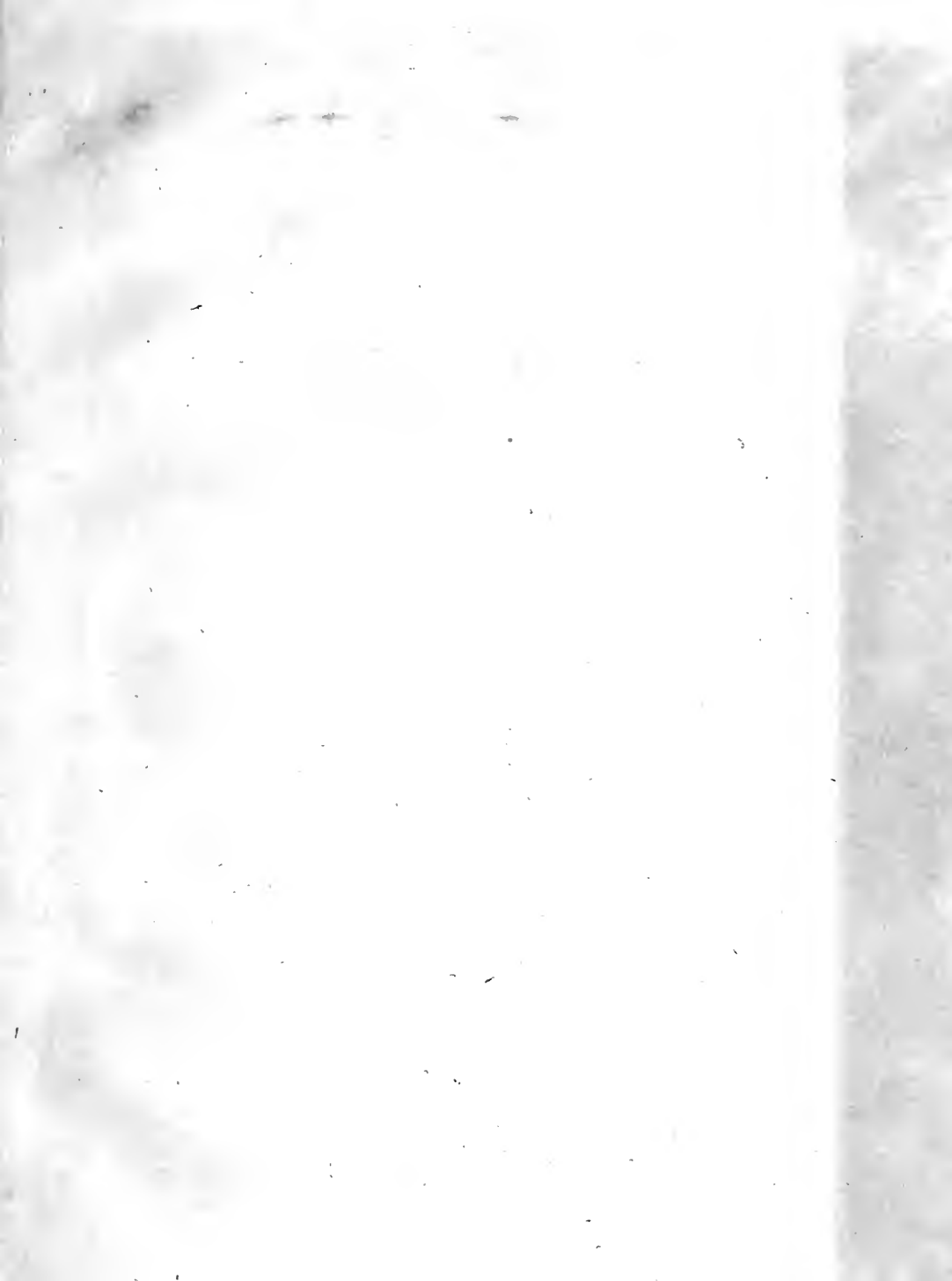
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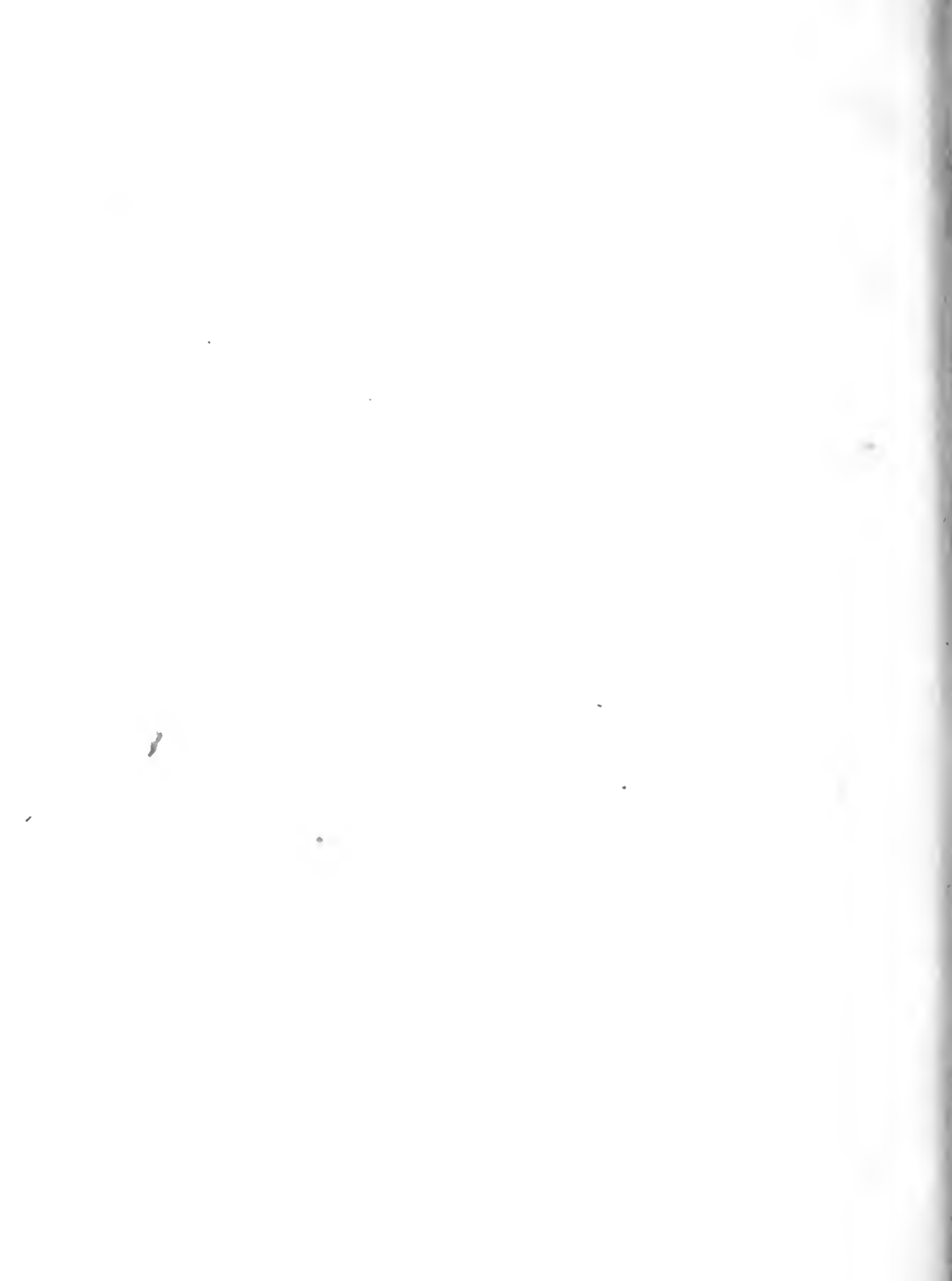
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JULY 15, 1896.

Unveiling the Monument to
JOHN HEMINGE AND HENRY CONDELL,
Friends and Fellow-Actors of Shakespeare,

AT

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, ALDERMANBURY, LONDON,

BY THE

RT. HON. THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

Presented to

Stanley Cooper F.R.S.E.

BY

CHARLES CLEMENT WALKER.





1896

FRONT VIEW OF MONUMENT.

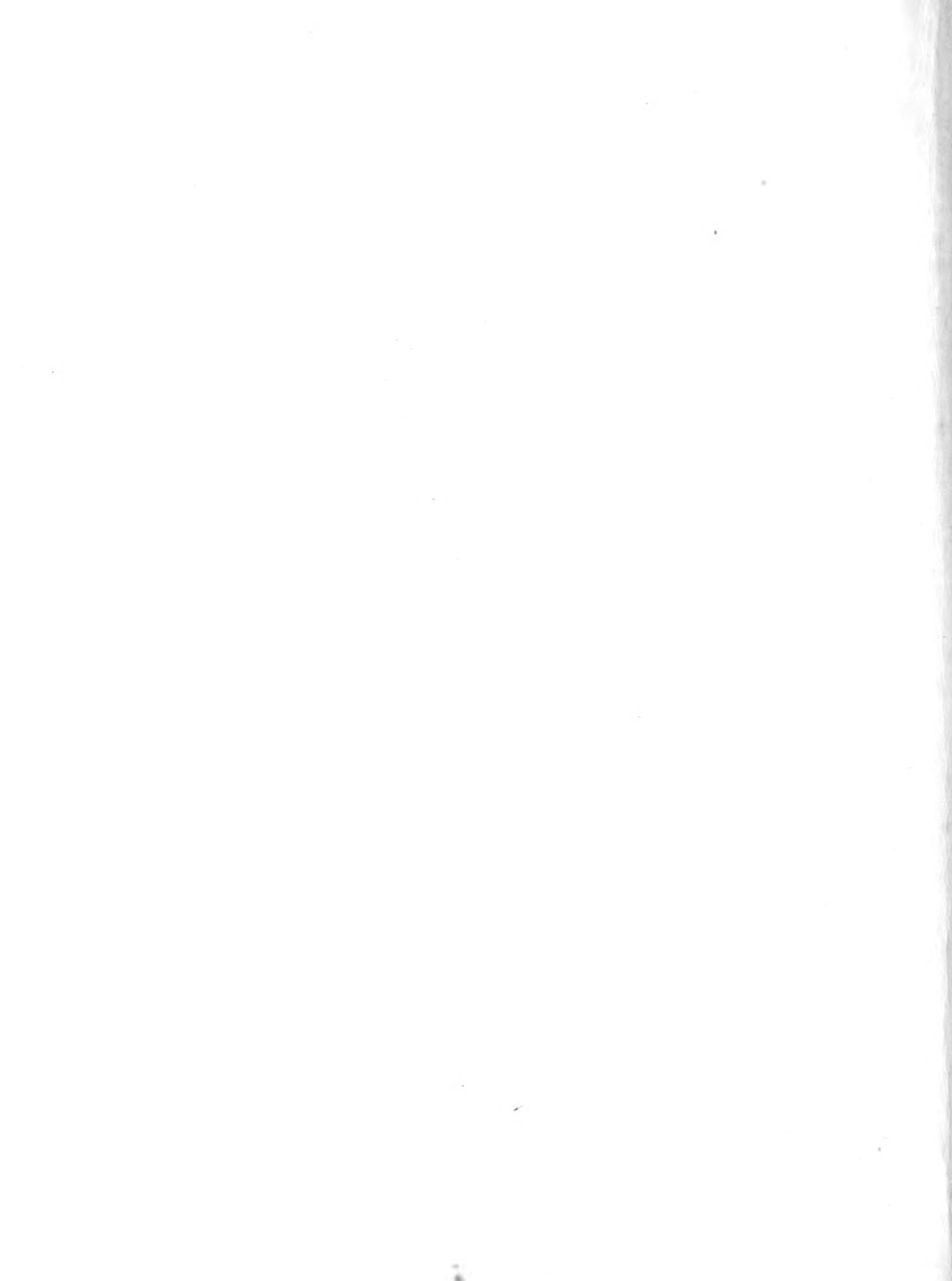
JOHN HEMINGE
AND
HENRY CONDELL

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-ACTORS
OF SHAKESPEARE

AND
WHAT THE WORLD OWES TO THEM

BY
CHARLES CLEMENT WALKER

1896



115

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PREFACE

THE following pages are a slight attempt to show the reasons that have actuated the writer to erect a monument to the memory of John Heminge and Henry Condell, the friends and fellow-actors of Shakespeare, who several years after his death collected and published his dramas in 1623 "according to the true original copies."

Without doubt a memorial to these men should have been raised by public subscription, but wide inquiry showed that while Shakespearian scholars well knew their merits and how much mankind owe to them, their names are almost unknown to the generality of readers; and of their merits, not one in a thousand of English-speaking men was conscious. This has probably arisen in consequence of most of the editions of the Works of Shakespeare being without the Dedication and Preface signed by Heminge and Condell, which appeared in the First Folio of 1623; and in biographies of Shakespeare which may be attached to the later editions, these actors are simply alluded to as having published his plays, so that their names are almost unknown. But, as will be seen, what we owe to them is of such inestimable value that if

public monuments are to be erected to our public benefactors none are more worthy to be commemorated than Heminge and Condell, to whom alone the world is indebted for this first edition of what it calls "Shakespeare." Their own story of the reasons which moved them to publish this collection is such a beautiful instance of unselfishness, singular love of Shakespeare, and unaffected modesty, that the writer felt it only needed to become well understood by the public for their merits to be appreciated. The most certain way to bring about this desirable result was to erect a monument to Heminge and Condell to be before the public eye. The writer hopes that this explanation will be counted a sufficient apology for his attempt to do honour to the memory of these two English worthies so long neglected.

It only remains for him to thank the Rev. C. C. Collins, M.A., vicar of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, for the heartiness in which he assisted in the work, and for his researches in the Registers and Parish books which have enabled the statements made of their relations to the parish to be verified. His thanks are also given to Dr. Furnivall, the founder and director of the New Shakspeare Society, whose great and critical knowledge of all relating to the Bard of Avon has been freely given when required.



FRONT TABLET.

JOHN HEMINGE AND HENRY CONDELL

FRIENDS AND FELLOWS OF SHAKESPEARE

WHEN Lord Tennyson—the greatest British poet of this generation—was laid in his grave in Westminster Abbey, the Works of Shakespeare were placed by his side. While he lay on his death-bed, being unable to speak, he motioned to those about him to bring this volume; and opening it, he pointed to words expressing the thoughts he wished to utter. His family regarded this volume, which had been his life's study, as too sacred to be any more used; they therefore buried his treasured Shakespeare with him. Such an incident attracted public attention, and it was then stated that the Victorian Laureate always spoke of Shakespeare as the greatest of all poets; and said that while he was able to form an idea of the intellectual efforts of other poets—their state of mind being comprehensible to him—of the state of mind and feeling that found expression in Shakespeare's dramas, he could form no conception whatever; and Shakespeare was the master at whose feet he was willing to sit.

It is now nearly three centuries since the volume we call "Shakespeare" appeared before the world. Age has

not dimmed its brightness; Time has proved its pre-eminence. There is probably no other masterpiece of literature which in the circumstances of its evolution has had a more remarkable history; and for the possession of this treasure we are indebted to two men well known to Shakespearian scholars; but by ninety-nine out of every hundred persons of the present day who read Shakespeare their names have never been heard of. They are John Heminge and Henry Condell.

To those who have investigated all that is known of the drama of that period, it has always appeared extraordinary that Shakespeare—one of the numerous family of a plain tradesman, who, with his wife, could not write their names—with his limited early education at Stratford-on-Avon, and his subsequently active career, should have produced such a remarkable set of compositions as his dramas. Although much has been discovered by research that was not known a century since, yet the wonder still remains. This is the origin of those strange attempts to father the poet's plays on Lord Bacon, notwithstanding the testimony of the ablest actors—like Sir Henry Irving—that none but an accomplished master of the stage could have produced them, which Bacon was not. But while we are unable fully to explain their production in such circumstances as developed Shakespeare, we have no such difficulty in showing to whom we are indebted for the preservation of his writings. Yet although they are more extensively read than ever, and the interesting spots in his native town are visited by increasing numbers from all parts of the



BUST OF SHAKESPEARE.

world, the names of these treasure-keepers are almost unknown without reference to books, except, as stated, to Shakespearian scholars,—who speak with all gratitude of John Heminge and Henry Condell who both collected Shakespeare's plays and gave them to the world, and thus preserved them as a possession of mankind for ever.

The career of Shakespeare may be briefly narrated. He was born in 1564. After going to the Grammar School at Stratford he left at the usual early age, probably twelve, to learn the business of his father, a glover, a dealer in wool and woollen goods; and probably a keeper of sheep for their wool, for there was a tradition of Shakespeare being a butcher. He married Ann Hathaway very early—who was eight years his senior; his first child was born before he was nineteen, and before he was twenty-one he was father of three children. From all that is known, he seems to have been compelled to leave Stratford, and went to London. His father was enterprising, and had been well-to-do, but his affairs were then getting into a state of insolvency. It is supposed Shakespeare obtained a situation at "the Theatre" in Shoreditch, the first and only one in England, built by John Burbage, a carpenter, one of a company of players. It is not known that Shakespeare was ever engaged in theatricals before he went to London. In about seven years after, we hear of him in 1592, as being then both an actor and writer of plays. Blank verse had been recently introduced, and was successfully employed by Marlowe, a dramatist. The plays were mostly written by University men, who were very dissolute, not to be depended upon, and who wrote to obtain

money for their necessities. Almost all died at an early age through their excesses. Shakespeare, we know by subsequent testimony, was "a deserving man," and while learning to become an actor, practised writing, after the best examples, and doubtless was useful in furnishing prologues and epilogues to other plays to give them novelty; thus, feeling his way, he had when he was twenty-eight years of age produced at least one play. To have done this in seven years is proof of his industry and ability. It was a great advantage to have such a person in the theatre, for he was always at hand, and to be depended upon, while the playwrights were recovering from their debaucheries. His life was now most active, he was continually playing, dressing up other plays, or it may be—as many did in the pressure of producing them—working with two or three others in getting a new play against a rival house. There is a record of six writers working in the production of one drama. This necessitated great speed in composition. By 1598 he had become a shareholder in the theatre, and had produced several of his well-known dramas, and was admired for his poems of "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece." We know that he was then associated with Richard Burbage (son of John Burbage), Heminge and Condell; and in a year or two after the whole company removed to Southwark to a new theatre which they built, and called the Globe; and there he continued till he closed his connection with the stage about 1612, and left to spend his days in retirement at Stratford, having acquired a moderate fortune, while most of his fellows and friends continued their profession.



BUST OF SHAKESPEARE (*Profile*).

It is well to try to realise the life that Shakespeare lived during these years. While playing regularly at their theatre during its season in the daytime, actors were in demand for pleasure elsewhere at nights, playing at great men's houses, or in yards of inns, and in summer, travelling as a company in various parts of the country; and except they were licensed under the protection of a nobleman as his "company of players," as some were, actors were looked upon as little better than vagabonds. Indeed, in the City of London they were not permitted to play at all, so they had their theatre outside the walls, at Shoreditch, and afterwards in Southwark across the Thames. Shakespeare never brought his family to live with him in London. He always lived in lodgings, and usually near the theatre. He went down to Stratford, where his wife and family were, away from all the discreditable scenes surrounding the theatre, bought property there with his earnings, and saw his children well provided for, and brought his father and mother out of their pecuniary difficulties, while he himself returned to London, playing there both by day and by night, and in his scanty leisure, producing two or three dramas at least each year, often under the most pressing circumstances, and with a speed that astonished his fellows, accustomed as they were to hasty productions. Queen Elizabeth having seen Falstaff in *Henry IV.*, greatly enjoyed it, and expressed a wish that she could see him in love. She was soon gratified, for Shakespeare produced his *Merry Wives of Windsor* in a fortnight. The public demanded a continuous succession of plays, usually a fresh play every day, for no plays had long "runs" like some of the present day. There

were numerous playwrights; Shakespeare was but one of many. He, like others, had to play in many pieces written by other men. New dramas were necessary. We know that one on an average was produced every seventeen days. The parts had to be learned, they had to be rehearsed, other duties of the theatre had to be performed, and when plays were stopped by public order in London on account of the plague, then so prevalent, the actors had to travel the country, setting up their booths in inn-yards, knocking at great men's doors in seasons of festivity for permission to play, applying for temporary licences to act from the local magistracy (often refused) putting up with any accommodation they could get at inns, and frequently disturbed with the roar of the customers. While it was a real pleasure to them to play before the Queen at Greenwich, and be appreciated by her, their principal occupation was to please the public. Under all these irregular, disturbing circumstances, our truly admirable national poet produced those thirty-six splendid dramas, which are our country's pride; and when all is considered they must be pronounced marvellous productions.

Shakespeare probably sold all his interest in the theatres, and retired from his active life at forty-eight years of age, to live on his hardly-acquired property in quietness in his native town, but he died four years afterwards, in 1616.

There is no sign whatever that Shakespeare contemplated the publication of his dramas. He of necessity must have been well aware of their superiority to those of his compeers. Several had been published, taken down in some cases by shorthand writers while hearing their performance,

or surreptitiously obtained from the acting parts. They were valuable property of the theatre that owned them, and their publication would have enabled rival theatres to play them ; so the owners used all possible means to prevent it. Indeed an attempt in the year 1600 to publish *As You Like It* was frustrated by an appeal to the Stationers' Company. Only very few of those printed had been revised. The booksellers made an arrangement with the Company of the Globe Theatre who owned them, to obtain the sanction of the Master of the Revels (who had the duties of the present Lord Chamberlain, but with more power) for the publication of *King Lear*, played before King James at Christmas 1606, and it ran through two editions at once. Plays were looked upon as written to be spoken ; and nothing but what was very popular, as likely to sell, was even surreptitiously got for printing. J. P. Collier who made so much research, supposed that fifty times as many plays had perished as were printed. It is quite certain that most of those which remain, rare as they are, have been recovered and preserved, chiefly by reason of the great research into the drama of the time, through the overwhelming interest taken in everything likely to have had influence on so unparalleled a phenomenon as Shakespeare.¹

¹ So rare are these quartos, as they are called, that while a fairly perfect First Folio will fetch at least £800 to £1,000, these command a much higher relative price. Within the last six years the following prices of some have been realised by auction : *King Lear*, £100 ; *Henry V.*, £145 ; *Midsummer Night's Dream*, £122 ; *Merchant of Venice*, £146 ; *Romeo and Juliet* (a fourth edition), £107 ; *Love's Labour's Lost*, £140 ; *Merchant of Venice*, £270 ; *Much Ado About Nothing*, £130, and a small volume entitled *Sir J. Falstaff and Merry Wives of Windsor*, first edition, was sold for £385. *Hamlet*, a

Up to the time of his death, there had been no collection of dramas printed of any dramatist. The great speeches of the orators of former ages that electrified their hearers have nearly all perished; and while this is so with burning thoughts on absorbing present subjects to living men, it is much more so with the spoken drama which men go to hear merely for amusement and pleasure. These dramas of Shakespeare, which are now immortal, might have perished likewise, so far as concerns anything that their author is known to have done for their preservation. We do not find at that period that men bequeathed any literature as personal property; and as plays were scarcely accounted literature, there was all the less probability of an author bequeathing them. In Shakespeare's will there is no mention of his plays whatever; for he had, no doubt, sold them to the theatre and been paid for them. If he had intended them to be published afterwards, his honest, ingenuous and beloved friends, Heminge and Condell who collected them, would certainly have said so, for in their preface to the collected dramas they apologise for publishing them.

Although Shakespeare's parents were probably both septuagenarians, their family was generally not long lived; but it is very pathetic, in our full knowledge of the immense debt the world owes to this most remarkable man, to think that he should not have lived longer than fifty-two years, to have had some foretaste of the appreciation of mankind for

fine copy, was bought for £300; quite perfect copies of all will fetch more. These single plays were probably first sold for 2*d.* or 3*d.* at most.

his life's labour. There is no appearance whatever that he had much indication of this, though the researches of scholars have found over one hundred and fifty "allusions" to Shakespeare in contemporary literature before his death.¹ As to the applause his plays received when acted, this he had fully appraised in his own summing up :—

Life's but a walking shadow, a poore player
That struts and frets his houre upon the stage,
And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
Told by an ideot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.²

There could hardly be anything more hopeless when the earth closed on Shakespeare's grave than the expectation that any more would be heard of his unprinted plays, beyond the applause that they might be greeted with when produced at the Globe Theatre, whose property almost, if not entirely they were ; for there were numerous other dramas which were played to suit the public taste for novelty and change, and there is no evidence that his plays would have had any other fate than those dramas, of which most have passed away, forgotten or perished.³ But a remarkable concurrence of circumstances caused them to be preserved.

No collection of the plays of any playwright had appeared in England up to the time of Shakespeare's death in 1616. In

¹ See the New Shakspeare Society's "Centurie of Praise," and "Further Allusions to Shakspeare."

² *Macbeth*, act v., scene 5.

³ Every search has been made, and there has not been found a single MS. of Shakespeare's, so it has long been concluded that all have perished ; and so extremely rare are original MS. dramas of the period, that there are only very few in the British Museum, and some fragments of others, almost all being by unknown writers.

that same year Ben Jonson, having arranged with the owners of his dramas, published ten of them in a volume, entitled *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*. Such an unusual occurrence made some stir among the players, who had a laugh at Ben's expense for calling his plays his "Workes." He also gave a list of the players who played them, among them we find Shakespeare, and others of his friends, as Burbage and Condell. It would be quite natural for the players who knew the qualities of the dramas better than any, to say "If Ben Jonson's plays are worth publishing, surely Will Shakespeare's deserve it more, since not only are they much better, but there are a great many more of them." Their author was, however, dead. He would have been the proper person to arrange with the proprietors of the theatre, as Ben did, and no one else could be expected to go to the trouble, for the proprietors of the Globe were not likely to agree to give other rival theatres their valuable property by publication; and then, who was to revise the plays except their author? But in the course of three or four years, three of Shakespeare's dearest friends for upwards of twenty years, Dick Burbage, Jack Hemmings, and Harry Condell became sole owners of the whole of the sixteen shares into which the proprietary of the Globe Theatre was divided; and being well-to-do, it probably entered into their minds that the world should know what an able man their Will Shakespeare was. They all wore mourning rings for him. He left them legacies in his will, although he had quitted the theatre for three or four years. It could not be that they expected much, if any, pecuniary gain by the publication, for Ben Jonson's collection of plays was slow

of sale, and no second edition was called for. The opportunity had arrived when they could show their esteem for their departed friend without injuring any interests but their own. There must have been something about Shakespeare of the most winning character, that those who knew him well should speak in such affectionate terms of him, and take so much trouble to show it. Genius, evidently, had no arrogance in him, or affectations of superiority. His fellows had no professional jealousy, but, as Ben Jonson said, they "loved the man."

Burbage died in 1619 at fifty-two years of age. We first hear of Condell in 1598, playing in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*. The tradition of the players was, that the manuscript of this play had been seen by Shakespeare when Jonson was in very low water, and had by him been introduced to the theatre—as well as Ben to the public; an act always remembered with gratitude by Jonson. Shakespeare himself took part in the play, and so did Burbage. As Condell's wife had his shares after his death, he must have continued his connection with the theatre until the last. His, and Hemming's name stood at the head of the players in the patent granted by Charles I. to them in 1625. We know very little of either of them. The parish books show that they were respected, by the offices to which they were appointed. This is saying much, for players were held in low esteem in the City, which was very puritanic and inveighed strongly against the stage. We find that Condell played with Burbage in most of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas, as doubtless Shakespeare did in their early plays. Condell lived in the parish of

St. Mary, Aldermanbury, London, for upwards of thirty years;—he was a sidesman in 1606, he had nine children;—but was living in the country at Fulham in 1625. In that year the plague in the City was very bad in summer and autumn; the theatre was closed as usual in times of plague; and the clergyman, together with large numbers of parishioners were carried off by it. Condell died in 1627. All that we have remaining of him is the signature to his will.

“Old Hemmings,” as he was called, though he signed his name “Heminge,” was probably an actor before Shakespeare. In his will he describes himself “Citizen and Grocer.” He also lived in the parish of St. Mary for forty-two years. His business was doubtless managed by his wife, as was customary. It was unusual for players to live far off the theatres. Aldermanbury was a convenient distance from the “Theatre” at Shoreditch, where they acted before the theatre was removed to Southwark, after the “Globe” was built in 1599. Heminge, like Condell, had been sidesman, and was also trustee of parish property in 1608. He had a family of fourteen children, and died in 1630. Of him we have nothing left, for, unlike Condell, although his will was drawn up while he was ill, it was not even signed, which evidently shows that he died before he was able to execute it. It was a plague year. Heminge’s name was at the head of the “King’s Players” in 1619, Condell coming next, Burbage being dead. Heminge took a more personal interest in the finances of the theatre, for his name appears as the receiver of payments in the warrants granted for sums of money for performances before the Court.



THE FAME OF SHAKESPEARE
RESTS ON HIS INCOMPARABLE DRAMAS.
THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT HE EVER
INTENDED TO PUBLISH THEM
AND HIS PREMATURE DEATH IN 1616
MADE THIS THE INTEREST OF NO ONE ELSE.
HEMINGE AND CONDELL
HAD BEEN CO-PARTNERS WITH HIM
IN THE GLOBE THEATRE SOUTHWARK
AND FROM THE ACCUMULATED PLAYS THERE
OF THIRTY FIVE YEARS
WITH GREAT LABOUR SELECTED THEM
NO MEN THEN LIVING WERE SO COMPETENT
HAVING ACTED WITH HIM
IN THEM FOR MANY YEARS
AND WELL KNOWING HIS MANUSCRIPTS
THEY WERE PUBLISHED IN 1623 IN FOLIO
THUS GIVING AWAY
THEIR PRIVATE RIGHTS THEREIN.
WHAT THEY DID WAS PRICELESS,
FOR THE WHOLE OF HIS MANUSCRIPTS
WITH ALMOST ALL THOSE OF THE DRAMAS
OF THE PERIOD HAVE PERISHED.

LEFT TABLET.

There seems every probability that both Heminge and Condell relinquished the active duties of their profession about the time they undertook the collection of Shakespeare's dramas for the press, as we do not find any trace of them afterwards as players. In 1608 they each had two shares out of twenty in the Blackfriars theatre also.

To these two men, Heminge and Condell, mankind is indebted for that precious volume we now call "Shakespeare."

They, and they alone, by their affection for their departed comrade, undertook the task of collecting and publishing his dramas; and they modestly apologise for doing what they wished their author had lived to have done himself. They say, in the preface to their book, that they are but "a payre, so carefull to shew their gratitude . . . to the dead." "We have but collected them and done an office to the dead to procure his Orphanes, Guardians, without ambition of selfe-profit or fame, onely to keepe the memory of so worthie a Friend and Fellow alive as was our SHAKESPEARE." It is impossible to doubt the genuineness of this tribute of affection for their departed friend. It seems probable that Burbage's name would have been associated with them, had he lived, as he was longer with Shakespeare than either Heminge or Condell; for there is every reason for believing that the whole of the plays were produced with Burbage's knowledge, and he always took the chief parts in them. He was the original Hamlet, Macbeth, Shylock, Richard III., and similar characters. His consent to the publication must have been obtained before his death, for he held so

many shares that his executors might otherwise have reasonably objected. He would therefore seem to have died soon after giving it, for the pair do not name their friend Burbage as taking part with them in collecting the plays. This seems to show that they commenced the work of collecting in 1619, or soon after the death of Burbage. To accomplish this they had to search through the accumulations of thirty-five years of play books, and select those they could be sure were the veritable works of their friend. They, apparently, got one or two plays from other theatres which they knew were Shakespeare's. None of the players of that historically celebrated company were more competent for the task than Heminge and Condell, from their long knowledge of Shakespeare, as well as from playing their parts in his dramas with him, instructed by him, and so much of his best work being done while they were associated together. They must have been industrious, careful men. Whatever plays for which he wrote prologues or epilogues, or that he altered and revised, they left out of their collection; their business was to collect Shakespeare's own complete dramas, and these alone.¹ They knew them well, for they were among the players who assembled at the taverns after the play had been returned from the Master of the Revels—who had the power to alter or strike out parts—to hear Shakespeare himself read his own compositions, over their wine, as was customary on a new play being produced; and no doubt by the experience of these practised actors, their quality as acting dramas was

¹ They left out *Pericles*, already twice printed in quarto, though much of the last three acts seems to be by Shakespeare.

EXTRACT FROM THE PREFACE
TO THE FIRST FOLIO OF 1623

TO THE GREAT VARIETY OF READERS

IT HAD BEEN A THING, WE CONFESSE,
WOULDE TO HAVE BEEN WISHED,
THAT THE AUTHOR HIMSELF HAD LI'VD.
TO HAVE SET FORTH, AND OVERSEEN
HIS OLDE WRITINGS, BUT SINCE IT HATH
BEN ORDAINED OTHERWISE, AND HE BY DEATH
DEPARTED FROM THAT RIGHT,
WE PRAY YOU DO NOT LEAVE HIS FRIENDS,
THE OFFICE OF THEIR CARE, AND PAINES,
TO HAVE COLLECTED & PUBLISHED THEM,---
ABSOLUTE IN THEIR NUMBERS,
AS HE CONCEIVED THEM.
WHO, AS HE WAS A RAPIDE IMITATOR OF NATURE,
WAS A MOST GENTLE EXPRESSER OF IT.
HIS MIND AND HAND WENT TOGETHER:
AND WHAT HE THOUGHT, HE ENTERED
WITH THAT EASINESSE, THAT WE HAVE SCARCE
RECEIVED FROM HIM A BLOT IN HIS PAPERS.

JOHN HEJNISE.
HENRIE CONDELL.

RIGHT TABLET.

much improved while being read. They also knew all the marginal and other alterations, omissions and additions which had been made to suit the circumstances of rehearsals, revivals, or the public, together with all the directions on them—many on inserted scraps of paper—to meet the exigencies of the time. They well remembered, too, the applause with which the finest parts, read for the first time, must have been greeted with by these competent critics. And if Heminge and Condell are not free from error, it is absolutely certain that they used their best judgment. It is a pleasure to read their own statement in their preface that the plays are delivered to the public “as he conceived them.” “Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together. And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers.” Ben Jonson wrote : “The players often said, in his writing, whatsoever he penned he never blotted out.” This testimony of Heminge and Condell, with Shakespeare’s own handwriting before them, is most valuable. He was accounted one of the swiftest of the playwrights. His two friends were not literary men, as their preface indicates, and the form and arrangement in the First Folio seems to have been arbitrary. They copied Ben Jonson’s volume in giving a list of the players who performed in the plays ; and this, at the present day, is of great interest and value.

There had been fourteen separate copies of the plays published in small quarto ; and some of these, before the authentic editions appeared, had been garbled, and four others mutilated. It is to such as these that Heminge and

Condell refer in their preface, as "diverse stolne and surreptitious copies maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors that expos'd them; even those are now offer'd to your view, cur'd and perfect of their limbes, and all the rest absolute in their numbers."¹

Out of the thirty-six dramas which they published, half were never printed in any form, and, with the four mutilated copies named, no less than twenty-two of these great plays first saw the light in this famous First Folio. Among these were such plays as *As You Like It*, *Julius Cæsar*, *King John*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Henry VI.*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, &c., all of which might otherwise have been lost to the world. Considering then, that whatever of the dramatic literature of that age has been preserved, has been chiefly kept through the research of scholars into all Shakespeare's surroundings, we may fairly conclude that even these would probably all have disappeared together but for this famous collection of Heminge and Condell² and the name of our great national poet would have been comparatively little known. The labours of these two worthies are therefore altogether priceless.

Nor must the enterprise of the printers, who were the publishers of this collection of dramas, fail to be acknowledged. On the title page we learn that the book was "Printed by Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount," and on

It is considered certain, from comparing these quartos with the First Folio of Heminge and Condell, that their statement is not quite applicable to every quarto. One or two of them are very correct, and their readings improved.

² See note 1, page 11, and note 3, page 13.

the last page "Printed at the Charges of W. Jaggard, Ed. Blount, I. Smithweeke, and W. Aspley." Whether Heminge and Condell offered the MSS. to the printers, or the printers asked to be permitted to print them, is altogether unknown. It was natural to think that while printers had eagerly seized every opportunity by stealth or otherwise, to print single plays, but were prevented, it would be to their advantage to have the whole, selected by his personal friends, whose property they were. Doubtless the publishers expected to make a legitimate profit by their enterprise. While it is quite clear that Heminge and Condell did not take the risk of publication, it is equally certain that they looked for no profit by it,¹ for they—personal friends of long standing—distinctly state that their only object in what they did was "to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was their Shakespeare."

The book was published in 1623, in folio, at the price of twenty shillings. Collier says: "The book does credit to the age, even as a specimen of typography." We are not able to say the number of copies that were printed. It was not quick of sale; a second edition was not called for until nine years afterwards, when Heminge and Condell were both dead. There is the highest degree of probability that the First Folio was produced in the small parish of St. Mary, Aldermanbury; for wherever the manuscript plays were kept, the collectors would most probably arrange them for publication at their homes, as they lived so near each other. Being such close friends, Shakespeare doubtless often visited them when in London.

¹ Page 17.

Every student cannot but express his gratitude to them for giving us this series of plays by their publication. Collier says he cannot enter as fully as he could wish of "How much we owe to Heminge and Condell." Halliwell-Phillips, who not only gave the largest portion of his life to everything relating to Shakespeare, but a considerable fortune also, says, "If they had not volunteered in affectionate remembrance of their colleague to gather together the works of Shakespeare, some of the noblest monuments of his genius might, and probably would, have been for ever lost."

There is no doubt that the English language as it now is, owes more to two books than to any others, namely, the English Bible and Shakespeare's dramas. The purity and beauty of the English Bible, as Cardinal Newman pathetically said after he left the English Church, "is like the distant bells of an English country church; the music is always in our ears, and can never be forgotten." But beautiful as the English Bible is, it is limited in its range of language compared with Shakespeare. His plays embrace every variety of thought, wit, humour, eloquence, beauty, majesty, pathos, grandeur, as well as the utmost delicacy of expression, with all that we use in our daily life in writing and speech, expressed in the happiest way possible. Indeed, we are told that in his own day it was said that, "whatever was written well by other men, you would find the same always better expressed by Shakespeare." Happily both Shakespeare and the Bible are the production of the self-same era, independent of each other, so that the English of both is the same, and both have profoundly impressed our language.

Universal testimony has pronounced this Folio of Shakespeare unrivalled. Honest and classic Ben Jonson, in his lines in the prefaces of it "To the memory of my beloved," knew the worth of the precious productions of his friend; and every subsequent age has confirmed all he said, that he was "the wonder of our stage," not even second to the best Greek poets; for he would "call forth Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles" to do him honour as "the star of poets." "He was not of an age, but for all time." The book is a standing marvel of one man's work; and the marvel is increased by the fact that such a production should have emanated from that inexperienced young man who first applied for work at the Theatre, Shoreditch, and was, in all probability, glad to take a servant's place. That such depth of thought, delicacy of feeling, wealth of illustration, insight into all human nature, expression, poetry, and eloquence, should have been born of the surroundings that Shakespeare lived in, thrown off in feverish haste to produce novelties for the public, often in the most disturbing circumstances, is a continuing wonder. All poets require time to polish their lines, writing them over and over again, in addition to correcting proofs for the press; but these wonderful dramas were not expected to be printed, or intended for the press, and they never received the correcting hand of the author. It adds to our conviction that they were so, that Heminge and Condell, from their literary inexperience, would be afraid to do anything more than produce the plays as Shakespeare left them for the stage. There probably is no instance of such a mass of superlative

literature from the hands of any one man under such extraordinary circumstances.¹ Although the plays had escaped the flames in the burning of the theatre, there still seemed no hope for them, their author being passed away. Probably had not Ben Jonson published his "Workes," it might never have occurred to Heminge and Condell that Shakespeare's plays ought to be published also. And but for the accident of change of proprietorship—the theatre, whose property they were, falling mainly to these two men—there could have been no probability of publication. It was these men's insight into their high quality; it was their love for their departed friend and his worth, that made them wish that the world should know his merit also. It was their unique knowledge of all he did, their self-sacrifice, their self-imposed labour, when all chance of preservation seemed hopeless, that gave such a precious heritage as the Folio Shakespeare to all mankind. Every circumstance relating to it seems to make it one of the most marvellous volumes we possess. Happily his friends were able to do this work before they died, for Condell departed this life four years after, and Heminge within a further three years.

We can scarcely imagine English literature without Shakespeare; yet, had it not been for these two unassuming, modest men—John Heminge and Henry Condell—it seems inevitable that the world would not have had the Shakespeare it now possesses.

Every English-speaking people has deemed it a duty to

¹ The literary matter of Shakespeare's dramas is about equal in quantity to the whole Bible.

JOHN HEMINGE

LIVED IN THIS PARISH
UPWARDS OF FORTY TWO YEARS
AND IN WHICH HE WAS MARRIED
HE HAD FOURTEEN CHILDREN
THIRTEEN OF WHOM WERE BAPTIZED
FOUR BURIED, AND ONE MARRIED HERE
HE WAS BURIED HERE
OCTOBER 12 1630.
HIS WIFE WAS ALSO BURIED HERE.

HENRY CONDELL

LIVED IN THIS PARISH
UPWARDS OF THIRTY YEARS
HE HAD NINE CHILDREN
EIGHT OF WHOM WERE BAPTIZED HERE
AND SIX BURIED
HE WAS BURIED HERE
DECEMBER 29 1627.
HIS WIFE WAS ALSO BURIED HERE.

LET ALL THE ENDS THOU AIMST AT
BE THY COUNTRY'S TRY GODS AND TRUTHS
HENRY VIII ACTS SCENE 5

BACK TABLET.

SHAKESPEARE

THE FIRST FOLIO

MR WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according
to the True
Originall Copies.

LONDON
1623.

*We haue but collected
them. and done an
office to the dead;---
without ambition either
of selfe-profit, or fame;
onely to keepe the
memory of so worthy
a Friend, & Fellow aline,
as was our SHAKESPEARE;---*

JOHN HEMINGE.
HENRY CONDELL.

perpetuate the remembrance of our great poet, proving that his friends right nobly "kept the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was their Shakespeare" by what they did. But it is remarkable that there is absolutely no record or memorial whatever of these two English worthies themselves, except the following two lines, each embedded and hidden among many others in the register of burials of St. Mary, Aldermanbury :—

1627. Dec. 29th. Mr. Condell.

1630. Oct. 12th. John Hemmings, player.

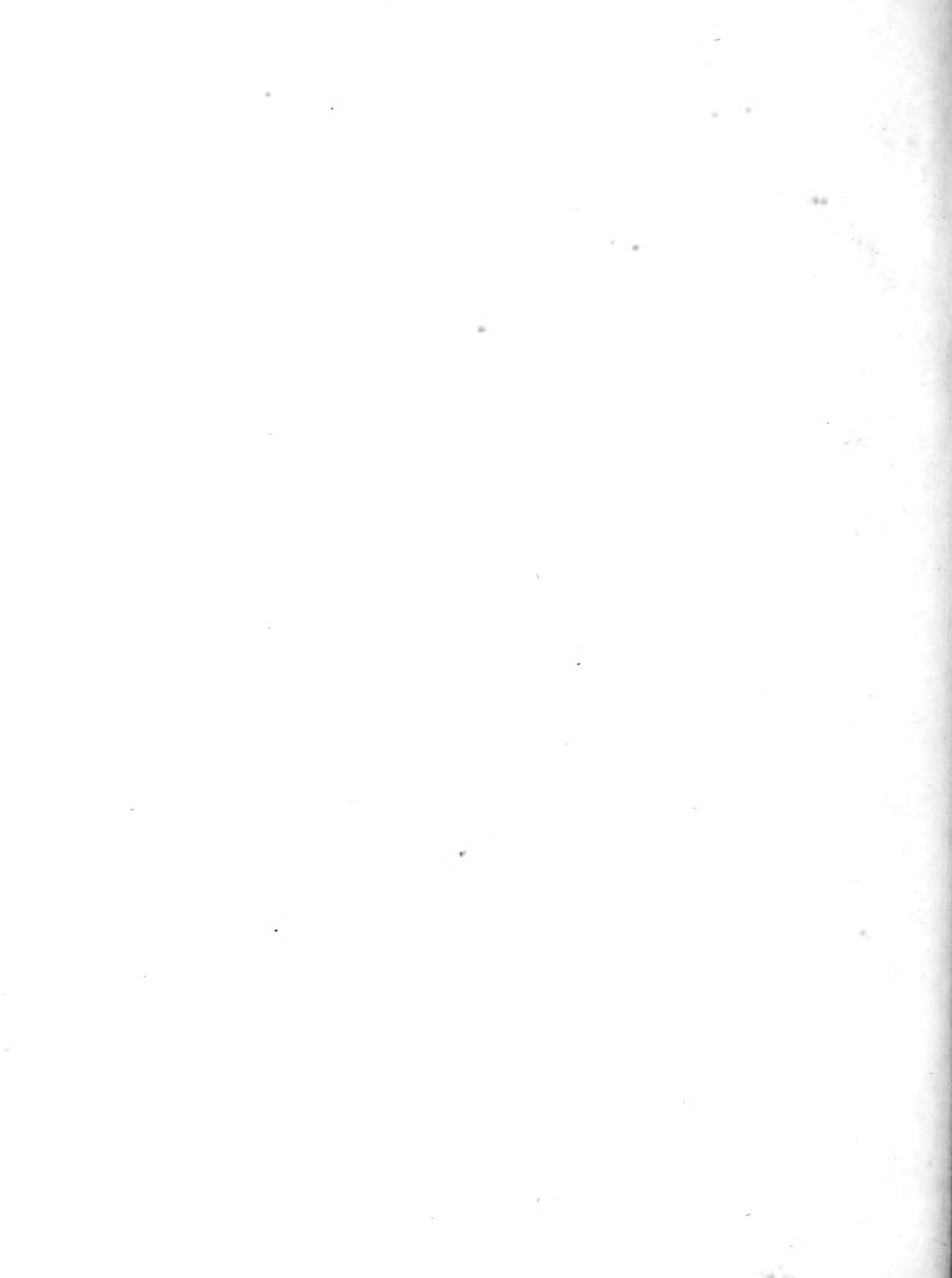
This omission is now remedied ; and happily, in doing this justice, we enhance, if it were possible, our estimation of Shakespeare.

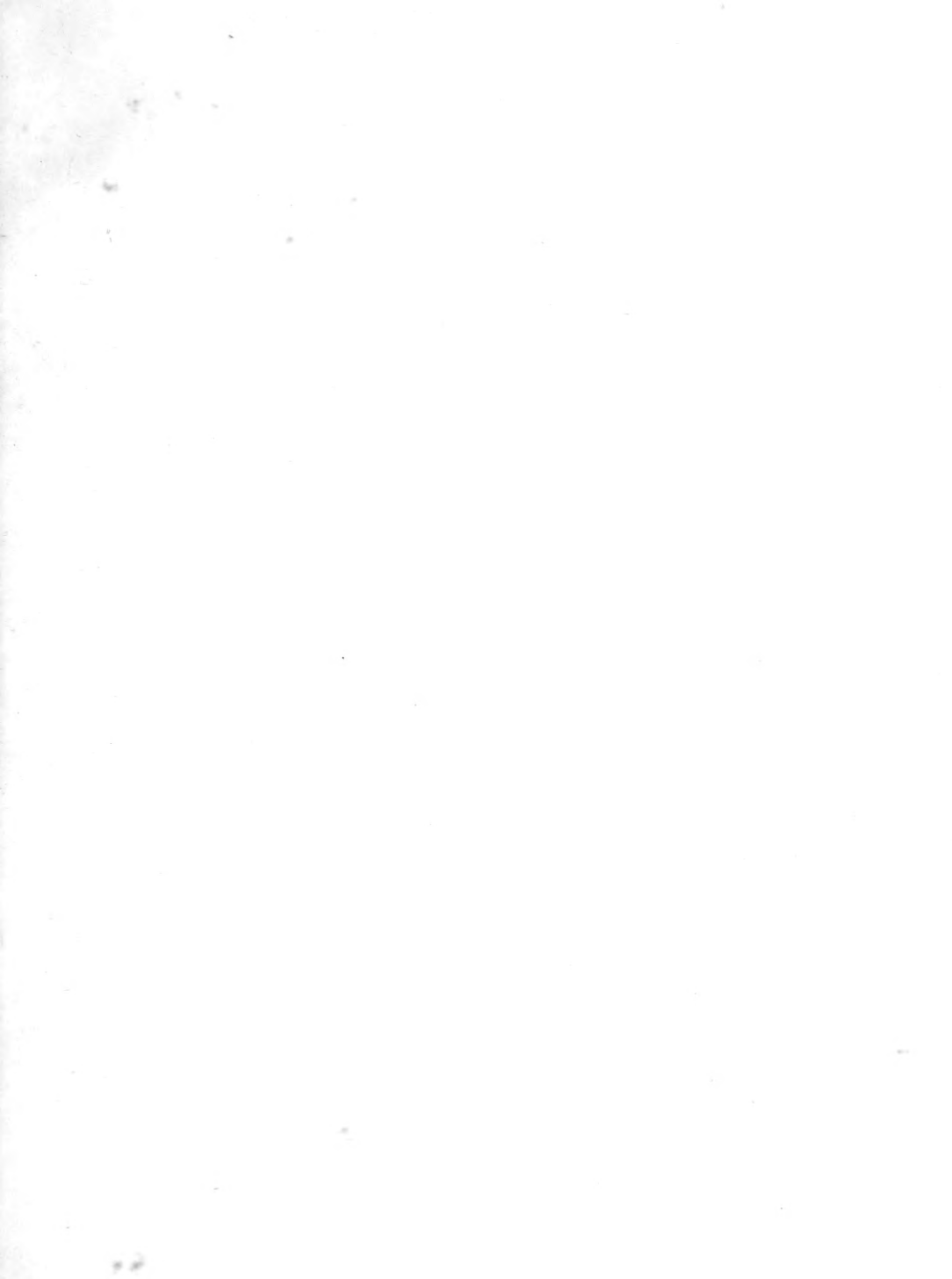
A monument is erected to Heminge and Condell in the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, in the City of London, which is open to the public. In this parish they so long lived, their families were born and brought up ; there they and their wives are buried. It is well seen from the busy thoroughfare. It is of Aberdeen red granite, polished, with an open book of the lightest gray granite representing the famous First Folio ; one leaf has its quaint title page, and on the opposite leaf the exquisite extract from the old players' own preface, already given on page 17.

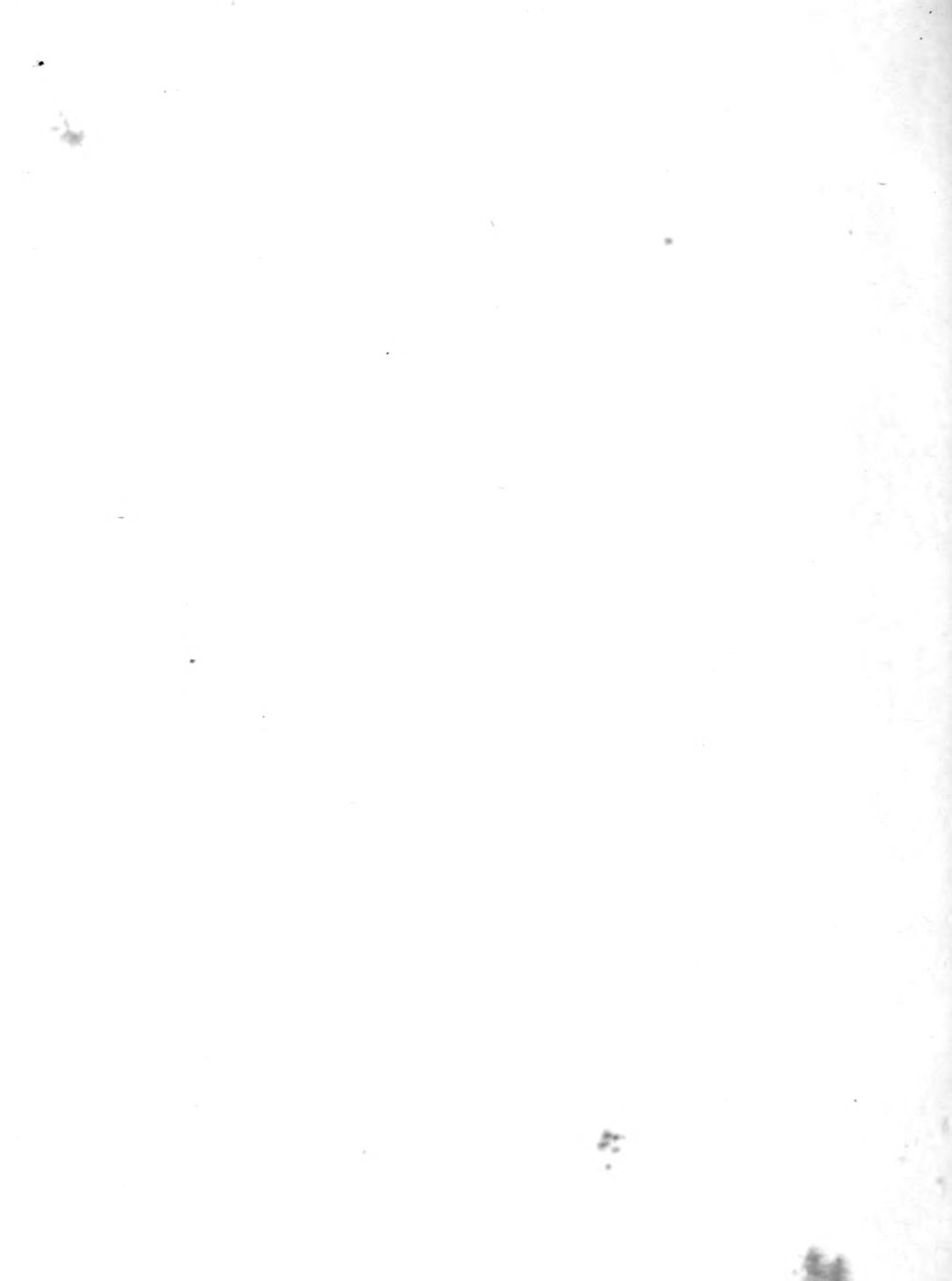
The four sides of the monument have each a bronze tablet with suitable inscriptions ; and the whole is surmounted by a bust of Shakespeare, also in bronze. The bust is by Mr. C. J. Allen, Professor of Art in University College, Liverpool, and is modelled from the bust of Shake-

speare in Stratford-on-Avon Church (erected by his daughter and her husband, Dr. Hall, and seen by his widow), and the portrait by Droeshout in the First Folio of 1623, certified by Ben Jonson as a good likeness. These are the only portraits without any flaw in their pedigree; and from them Mr. Allen has produced a work of art. The granite monument is erected by Messrs. Alexander Macdonald and Co., of Aberdeen. The design of the monument and the inscriptions are by Mr. C. C. Walker, Lilleshall Old Hall, Shropshire, at whose cost the whole has been produced. There being no likeness existing of Heminge and Condell, it was thought more suitable to produce a model of the First Folio, the publication of which is commemorated. The tablets speak for themselves. It may be noted that this is the only public bust of Shakespeare in the City of London.

It is hoped that this memorial of these two Englishmen, who deserve the gratitude of mankind, will preserve their memory to future generations.









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